

A Tale of 2 Hearts

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, good morning. It is a great privilege to be back.
- ! It's been a couple weeks since we've been here.! Maybe a little longer than that. But it's always good to be back here at Bell's Hill. If you have your Bible, I would like to ask you to open it to Mark 14.
- Mark 14. Let's just open our time with a word of prayer.
- God, we love you and we thank you that you love us, that you care for us, that when we come before you, that you bend an ear to us.
- God, we pray for this time that you would be glorified, that your word would be made evident in our lives. God, I pray that by your Spirit that you would transform us more into your image.
- [1 : 1 9] It's your name that we pray. Amen. Amen. So, considered England's most athletic cricket player.
- I don't know if anyone, has anyone here ever played cricket before? I've never played. I quite enjoy baseball. I know that there's a little familiarity there, a similarity there.
- But in the 1800s, there was a national celebrity and an heir to a vast fortune. His name was C.T. Studd.
- He had everything. He had wealth. He had fame. He had a bright and promising future. But after coming to faith in Christ, he shocked society by giving it all up.
- First, he gave away an entire inheritance that would be equivalent to millions of dollars today. He gave to Christian missions and to various charities.
- [2 : 2 6] Then, despite the criticism that he received from others, he left England to become a missionary in China, India, and then later, even in the Congo, he often lived in harsh conditions.
- He battled sickness. And he would ultimately die in insignificance by the standards of the world. People looked at his life and they called it foolish.
- They called it a waste. There was comments that would say, what a waste of talent. He could have lived comfortably.
- He could have used his influence for a greater good. And yet, he gave it all away. As we look in Mark 14, Mark 14 begins the final section of Mark's Gospel.
- And the time is coming where the Son of Man, where Jesus is going to be betrayed and handed over to the religious leaders and he's going to be condemned to death by Rome.
- [3 : 3 9] Mark is the Gospel that is often cited for its brevity or its being quick to the point. But here in Mark 14, in this final section, it's almost as if Mark kind of slows down and he takes a step back and gives a little more detail into the story, into the life of Jesus.
- And he shows the chain of events that lead to the betrayal, the arrest, and then the death, and then ultimately the resurrection of Christ. And so in these first 11 verses of Mark 14, as Mark unfolds the betrayal of Jesus, he begins with this internal plot and this desire by the chief priests and the scribes.

And then he ends with this desire being brought to fruition by the betrayal of Judas in verses 10 and 11. So we have verses 1 and 2 and then it connects with 10 and 11.

And then right sandwiched in the middle in this account is where we find Jesus being anointed at Bethany. And so we have this middle section here that we will spend the majority of our time and it's in this account that we see that there are two responses to Jesus.

There are only two responses to Jesus. There is adoration and there's rejection. And so I want us to read this passage together and then we'll just begin to unpack it a little bit.

[5 : 20] So Mark 14 beginning in verse 1. It says, It was now two days before the Passover and the feast of unleavened bread. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him.

For they said, Not during the feast lest there be an uproar from the people. And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper as he was reclining at table a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard very costly and she broke the flask and poured it over his head.

There were some who said to themselves indignantly, indignantly, why was this ointment wasted like that? For this ointment could have been sold for more than 300 denarii and given to the poor.

And they scolded her. But Jesus said, Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me.

For you always have the poor with you. And whenever you want you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. She has done what she could. She has anointed my body beforehand for burial.

[6 : 37] And truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her. Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them.

And when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money. And he sought an opportunity to betray him. So if we want to break this down into sections, in the first two verses we have really the plot.

The plot to let's do away with Jesus. The chapter begins with the chief priests and the scribes seeking how to arrest Jesus and put him to death.

death. The religious leaders of the day had become increasingly frustrated with Jesus. Most immediately back, just a few chapters, in Mark 11, Jesus, he entered into Jerusalem only to see that the temple was being used in a wrongful manner.

Instead of a place of worship, it was being used as a marketplace. And Jesus came and he stated, my house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations, but you have made it a den of robbers.

[7 : 58] The passage goes on to tell us that the chief priests and the scribes, they overheard Jesus. And in verse 18 of that chapter, it says, they were seeking a way to destroy him, for they feared him.

So Mark, now, in chapter 14, is picking back up with the high priests and with the scribes, seeking a way to arrest and to get rid of Jesus. But they encounter a problem.

The problem is the timing. They want to get rid of Jesus, but it's the week of the Passover celebration. The Passover celebration would be the most important feast of Old Testament Judaism, and it's the reminder of God's deliverance of his people from the hand of the Egyptians.

And God had ordered the people of Israel to put the blood of a slaughtered lamb on their doorposts that they would be spared the judgment brought about by the angel of death. And so, this week-long event, this week-long festival, would have brought in large crowds of Jewish people into the city to celebrate and to remember all that God had done for them.

It's said that during this time, there would have been upwards of two million people who would come to the city. The Roman government would have taken all security precautions to prevent any kind of Jewish uprising.

[9 : 33] And so, for this reason, the chief priests and the scribes, they were plotting a way to destroy Jesus, to arrest him, and then to kill him secretly. They didn't want to invoke the crowds, and so they wanted to bring about this plan, but they wanted to do it in such a way that it would not cause an uproar.

And so, this is the scene that Mark gives us, and then it's almost as if Mark shifts gears a little bit, and he transitions to a completely different subject, if you will.

And so, then we have Mary's costly gift in verses 3-9. And so, this is at the point where this narrative really kind of shifts, and it takes a different direction.

Mark tells us that Jesus was in Bethany. It's a village about two miles from Jerusalem in the home of Simon the leper. We know that lepers were considered unclean, and so because they were considered unclean, they were excluded from any and all social occasions.

And so, because Simon the leper is there, it would have been understood here in this passage that Simon is no longer a leper, but Simon had been healed. And so, Jesus is there, and Jesus is reclining at the table when Mark tells us that a woman comes in with an alabaster flask of ointment, of pure nard.

[11 : 06] Mark doesn't identify the woman to us, but we know from John's gospel that the woman is Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus who lived in Bethany.

And Mark tells us that this woman, she comes in, she walks in with this costly alabaster flask that contains within it, this very costly perfume or nard.

Mark tells us that the value of this nard is worth more than 300 denarii. This would be the equivalent of a year's earning. On top of the monetary value of the ointment that's inside of this flask, you have the flask itself.

It's probably a family heirloom in which case there would have been sentimental value. This would have been something that would have been kept away, not to be just used, it would have been perhaps set aside in case of some sort of maybe if an emergency situation happened and you had to get rid of it.

But this woman, she walks into the room and what does she do? she doesn't simply just take the top off and pour a little on the head of Jesus, which maybe would have been seen as acceptable, I'm not sure.

[12 : 40] But she doesn't do that. Mark tells us that she broke the flask, that she smashed it. I am not a big repair guy.

if you ever have something that is broken and you want it fixed, call Cal. Don't call James. In fact, recently, about a month or so ago, one of my kids came to me with a toy that had a crack in it and asked me to fix it.

And my first inclination is, sure, I'll fix it. I'll go throw it in the bin. And we will go to the store. I'll spend two pounds. We'll get a new one. That's fixing it.

My wife, on the other hand, if there is a possibility of something being repaired or fixed, she's going to attempt to fix it. I believe in this case, we ended up on Amazon buying some super glue.

The flask was broken. there was no chance to repair this.

[13 : 57] The totality of the gift was spent on Jesus. This costly and precious perfume would have covered his body from head to toe.

So this is what happens. And from this, from this breaking of this alabaster flask, and anointing Jesus from head to toe, we have two responses.

Check the first response. Beginning in verse 4, it says, As he was reclining at the table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard.

That was verse 3. Very costly. She broke the flask and poured it over his head. Verse 4, There were some who said to themselves indignantly, Why was this ointment wasted like that? For this ointment could have been sold for more than 300 denarii and given to the poor.

And they scolded her. The actions of Mary were met with anger and resentment by some. Mark says that they were indignant.

[15 : 07] This is more than just an aggravated feeling. They were furious at what had happened. They asked, Why was this ointment wasted?

This could have been sold for more than 300 denarii. It could have been given to the poor. What are you thinking? And perhaps maybe there is some genuineness in their remarks.

John's gospel says that this indignation came from Judas. And so in John 12, 4-6 it says, But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples, he who was about to betray him, said, why was this ointment not sold for 300 denarii and given to the poor?

He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief. And having charge of the money bag he used to help himself to what was put into it. So regardless of the motive behind the rebuke, the heart behind the condemnation was that this costly devotion that was given to her Lord was a waste.

It's an assertion that there could have been a better use of the money. And the rebuke ends with the saying they scolded her.

[16 : 29] The Greek word behind this phrase is in brement thigh, which is usually the meaning here is vehement. one commentary said, the idea here is to flare the nostrils in anger.

And so perhaps the image that might would come to mind, at least it did to me, I don't know if you've seen any kind of movie where there is a bull, and they zoom up to the face of the bull, and the bull's nose is flaring as he stares down the matador about to charge.

the people were indignant. So that was one response.

The second response is from Jesus, and we see that Jesus responds with deep appreciation. It says in verse 6, but Jesus said, leave her alone.

Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. for you always have the poor with you. And whenever you want, you can do good for them.

[17 : 41] But you will not always have me. She has done what she could. She has anointed my body beforehand for burial. And truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.

Jesus responds with, let her alone. What she has done is a beautiful thing. It's not a waste. And he says his reasoning is that you always have the poor with you and whenever you want you can do good to the poor.

And so what we shouldn't see this as is Jesus is not saying that the poor do not matter. That's not what Jesus is saying here. But we know from Jesus' life and ministry it was predominantly the outcasts who came to him that Jesus turned around and showed compassion towards.

So we know that he's not saying don't care for the poor here. But here in this moment with Jesus' death on the horizon he is saying you can help the poor anytime you want but you do not always have me.

And so here what Jesus is doing is he's! placing! And he's saying what you I lost my train of thought I'm so sorry but Jesus continues he says you always have the poor she has done what she could she has anointed my body beforehand for burial we don't know how much this woman understands regarding Jesus' coming death we know that Jesus had spoken of his impending death on several occasions and every time he spoke of his coming death it often perplexed the disciples who were there and they failed to truly understand what

[19 : 57] Jesus was saying what you might expect those closest to Jesus to do for him you might would expect the disciples to do something similar but it's this unnamed woman that does this special thing she comes to Jesus and in adoration and worship she she offers her best to Jesus Jesus says that this is far from a waste in this act of worship Mary is preparing Jesus for his death in verses 10 we pick up it says then Judas Iscariot who was one of the twelve went to the chief priest in order to betray him to them and when they heard it they were glad and promised to give him money and he sought an opportunity to betray him so just as Mary was preparing for

Jesus death on the inside so the high priests and the scribes were also preparing for Jesus death but in a completely different manner and as they were preparing for a way to kill Jesus here comes this man Judas perhaps Judas seeing this act of wastefulness is what ultimately led him to believe that there is nothing else to be gained from following this man Jesus any longer and so Judas in exchange for thirty pieces of silver he agrees to hand over Jesus to the high priests!

and it's here that we find one of the most bitter sentences in all of Mark's gospel that the betrayal of the Son of God by Judas brought about gladness and so and so I want you to notice the contrast between Judas and Mary we have Mary who adores Jesus but we have Judas who betrays Jesus Mary values the death of Jesus greatly and we see this by the sacrificing of the nard Judas is prepared to hand Jesus over for thirty pieces of silver so for Mary Jesus was worth everything and for Judas it was merely thirty pieces of silver and

Mary's sacrifice will be remembered to her honor Judas's betrayal will also be remembered but it won't be remembered for honor it will be remembered for shame and so as we look at this passage what can we learn what can we take away for ourselves how can this change us and I think that there's two truths that we see in this text the truth the first truth that we see is that proximity to Jesus does not guarantee faithfulness proximity to Jesus does not guarantee faithfulness notice the intentionality in the details that Mark gives us from the outset of this story in verses three it says and while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper and he was reclining at a table a woman with an alabaster flask of ointment of nard very costly and she broke the flask and poured it over his head so we have several things here

Bethany a town that was outside the city of Jerusalem we have Simon the leper a leper was the epitome of an outsider and then we have a woman by leaving her unnamed Marcus casting her as an outsider and so we contrast this with Judas who was on the inside throughout Jesus' ministry and knew Jesus probably far better than most would have yet it is from the unnamed woman that comes genuine worship and adoration and devotion I mean think about the countless hours that Judas would have spent at the feet of Jesus walking beside him seeing the miracles that Jesus is performing Judas looked like a disciple he acted like a disciple he even spoke like a disciple imagine the other disciples were convinced that

[25 : 07] Judas was a follower of Christ yet we know that Judas was far from God Judas despite being with Jesus for so long didn't treasure Christ he had a love for the things of the world and what they could offer like Judas we can we can all go through the motions and look like a follower of Christ but the question is do we truly treasure!

Christ have we come to the point where we realize that if the world took all that we owned and we had nothing but Christ that would be enough proximity to Jesus does not guarantee faithfulness the second truth that we have in this passage is that genuine faith leads to genuine sacrifice the disciples were guilty of judging the external while Jesus judged by the internal by the standards of the disciples Mary had acted in a wasteful manner there was so much that could have been done with that perfume with that alabaster flask and it was used wrongfully but Jesus argued that what she did was not a waste it was beautiful she did what she could and this might remind us this phrasing of she did what she could might remind us to a few chapters earlier in chapter 12 at the end of chapter 12 in verses 41

Mark tells us that Jesus was observing people putting money into an offering box! widow to do to to!

to she could! to to! to! to! In other words she did what she could! So we think about this how vastly different we look at the offering of Mary and we look at the offering of this poor widow and how vastly different when it comes to some or value yet Jesus gives them the same commendation Jesus saw beyond the external gift and into the heart of genuine faith and discipleship what made Mary's sacrifice so valuable was not the amount that was given but the fact that it was an act of genuine faith a genuine love and devotion to her savior and so genuine faith leads to a genuine sacrifice and so then the concluding question that we need to ask ourselves this morning is how are we like

Judas and how can we be more like Mary are there aspects of our lives where we withhold things that we deem too valuable for Jesus what particular things do you struggle to give to Jesus because to do so it might would be considered a waste by some where or what is it in your life that if God asked you for it you would be reluctant to give is your mentality I will be involved in local church on Sunday but don't ask to give me my time throughout the week I'm just too busy or perhaps you can sometimes have a mentality of I will be civil to my neighbor whenever I see them outside but don't ask me to invest into their lives I have other things I need to do or perhaps

[29 : 37] I will give to the kingdom and for the glory of God but this money here that I've saved up is for me in case I need it for X Y or Z it's easy to give out of surplus it's much harder to give when it is a true and genuine sacrifice right?

Mary understood this truth that all that she had belonged to her Savior and everything that we have is his this is what we say when we give our lives to Christ and Mary understood that nothing was of greater importance than the worship and the adoration of her king and Judas was a man who was not willing to part from his own desires and wants for the sake of Christ he wanted to he wanted to sound noble in his remarks right he says this money could have been used for the poor we could have helped so many people with this but in making this comment he is revealing in his heart that Jesus was not worthy of everything and so we as readers today we see through this noble comment in

John's gospel that he didn't really want to give money to the poor he wanted to keep the money for himself and so as we read this we read it in light of knowing both John and Mark account and so we can read into the heart of Judas a little bit and it's almost as if Judas is saying something like we could have given all this money to the poor we could I mean we won't but we definitely could have now we no longer even have the option what a waste this is what we could have done with it are we guilty of putting up untouchable boundaries on how ourselves or how our resources can and should be used for the glory of God are we guilty of sometimes having the same mentality of I can't do that with this with my time or my money or my resource

I can't do that because if I use it for this purpose then I won't be able to use it for these other good purposes whenever maybe if we look deep down internally we never intended to use it for anything but ourselves anyway the world tells us today you do you do what's best for you this is what Judas is trying to do Mary is living counter cultural to the world she lived in we know this by the way that she was scolded for her actions but the way that Mary lived is also counter cultural to the world that we live in today because when we approach Jesus with an attitude that nothing is off limits that you can have my most valuable possessions we can expect to be thought of as a life that is wasted

C.T. Studd was a man that had the brightest of futures ahead of him and he was ridiculed by outsiders as a life that had so much potential and yet in the end it was squandered in response to the ridicule that Studd often heard as he would maybe you know hear remarks that were being said in response here's what C.T.

[33 : 57] Studd said he said if Jesus Christ be God and died for me then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for him we sacrifice our greatest in this life knowing that Christ sacrificed everything for us that when Christ died and hung on the cross he left nothing that we were dead in our sin and utterly hopeless Christ left his throne in heaven to rescue us by living the perfect life that we could never do and by dying the death that we deserve not only by his death are we declared forgiven but by exchanging our filthy rags for his riches we have been declared righteous before a holy God no longer condemned or enslaved to our sin we are free and we are free to offer all that we have because he offered all for us and so when we live a life similar to

Mary where we say God there is nothing off limits I offer my life to you I offer my time I offer my possessions when we live this kind of life it is not a life that is wasted it is a life well lived in honor to our King let's pray God you are good you are deserving of all that we have you are deserving of our time our thoughts all that all of our possessions father you are worthy of it all God would you convict us and open our eyes and show us that if all was taken away from us and all we had was you that you would be sufficient

God I pray that you would help us to live a life of surrender be willing to give up the comforts of this world in pursuit of you in pursuit of the love of you and what you have called us to do to give our lives to you and to love you and to love our neighbor God would you help us to not live for ourselves but help us to die to ourselves and knowing that it is worth it it's your name that we pray!

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